



# SFL INSIGHTS

ONCE A SOLDIER, ALWAYS A SOLDIER...A SOLDIER FOR LIFE!

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

*By Colonel Jarrett Thomas, Director, U.S. Army Soldier for Life*

The U.S. Army established the Soldier for Life directorate in 2012 to maintain trust with our Army family during and after service. This initiative was designed to help our Soldiers, veterans, and families transition from military service "career ready" and connect them to an established network to link them to employment, education, and health resources.



The Soldier for Life directorate is the Army's connection arm with the Army network, government,

Veterans Service Organizations, Military Service Organizations, communities, nonprofits, academia, and industry.

*(Cont. Page 2)*

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

- **ARMY PAYS JOINS SOLDIER FOR LIFE** 3
- **SUPPORTING VETERANS THROUGH MENTORSHIP** 4
- **CONNECTING TO COMMUNITIES** 6
- **ARMY CREDENTIALING ASSISTANCE SUCCESS** 7
- **FROM SELFLESSNESS TO SELF-CARE** 8
- **SFL ANALYTICS ALLEY** 10

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK (CONT.)

We assist in synchronizing the efforts of these numerous stakeholders operating in the veteran-support space, ensuring that transitioning Soldiers, their leaders, and the counselors who prepare them for civilian life know of the many resources and opportunities available to them.

Our mission is to help influence policies, programs, and services supporting Soldiers, veterans, and families throughout the Soldier Life Cycle by engaging with government and non-government organizations to empower a lifetime of service.

Our strategic-level outreach organization is focused on connecting services and opportunities to new recruits, currently serving Soldiers, and veterans and their families. At the same time, we identify gaps, inefficiencies, and barriers to success in existing programs and initiatives, and advocate for policy, program, or procedural changes to close those gaps and remove barriers.

Our directorate focuses on ensuring Soldiers, veterans, and families have awareness of – and access to – the services and opportunities provided by external stakeholders like private organizations, government, nonprofits, and institutes of higher learning.

Through aggressive networking, research, and personal interaction with various groups, agencies, and organizations, we identify and share best practices with government and non-government entities that have the mission and capability to provide support to Soldiers, veterans, and families.

Soldier for Life leverages the Army network and centers of influence to link Soldiers, veterans, and

families to appropriate governmental and non-governmental programs and opportunities. We inform Soldiers, veterans, and families of available opportunities through organizational engagement, social media, traditional media, and coordination with Army touchpoints.

Working with organizations across the Army, we help create an environment where Soldiers embrace their positive Army experience and return to their communities as Army ambassadors to help inspire the next generation to serve.

Each year, approximately 130,000 Soldiers transition from military to civilian life. For many, transition is an opportunity to take on new challenges and build the next chapter in their lives. For others, this time can be daunting and filled with a mix of emotions and uncertainties.

Existing research shows that, for some, navigating the military transition can still be burdensome and confusing for veterans, their families, and their supporters. While progress has been made, data suggests that around half of all recently separated veterans don't connect with available resources and benefits for several years, and sometimes only when they are in crisis. Improving military-to-civilian transition can serve as early intervention to downstream challenges with veteran homelessness, suicide, health, unemployment and underemployment, and poverty. Addressing these challenges can have lasting ripple effects on our growing community of veterans, family members, survivors, and caregivers.

*Cover Photo: COL Jarrett Thomas, GEN Gary Brito, CASA Angela Showell (Delaware), and Antonio Johnson at AUSA in October 2024.*

    @USArmySFL

 [Soldier for Life Podcast](#)



[usarmy-sfl@army.mil](mailto:usarmy-sfl@army.mil)

[soldierforlife.army.mil](http://soldierforlife.army.mil)

# ARMY PAYS JOINS FORCES WITH SOLDIER FOR LIFE

By Antonio Johnson, Program Manager, U.S. Army Partnership for Your Success Program

The U.S. Army Partnership for Your Success (PaYS) program has officially announced its move to the Soldier for Life directorate.

In October 2023, the Secretary of the Army announced her decision to transform the Army Recruiting Enterprise. This transition involved the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC) divestment or realignment in some of their accessions programs. As a result, the TRADOC G-3/5/7 realigned the PaYS program from the Accessions Directorate to Soldier for Life.

PaYS provides an opportunity for Soldiers to serve their country while preparing for their future by partnering with a cross-section of corporations, companies, and public sector agencies. The PaYS partners guarantee Soldiers an interview and possible employment after their service in the Army. The program is part of the Army's effort to partner with America's business community and increase Soldiers' success.

PaYS connects Soldiers with employers who understand the skills, discipline, and work ethic that

military service members bring to business. This program is part of a long-term U.S. Army effort to help Soldiers forge professional relationships with businesses and encourage business owners to look to the Army as a plentiful and reliable recruiting source. Since PaYS began in 2000, more than 1,300 employers have partnered with the program.

Since the merger, PaYS and SFL have teamed up to promote awareness of both programs in several events nationwide. Most notable are the PaYS ceremonies with the U.S. Virgin Islands Government, Northrup Grumman, and the State of

Nebraska, as well as the AUSA Conference. SFL and PaYS are collaborating to enhance the job prospects for transitioning Soldiers and veterans, offering them a bridge to post-military careers with companies that want to enhance their hiring pools with quality veteran talent.

For more information about the PaYS Program, visit [www.armypays.com](http://www.armypays.com).



Top photo: Antonio Johnson, CASA Richard Burke (Nebraska), and COL Jarrett Thomas attended the State of Nebraska PaYS signing ceremony in September 2024.

Bottom photo: Senior leaders, USVI National Guard, COL Jarrett Thomas, CASA Beresford Edwards, LTG Maria Gervais, and Antonio Johnson attended the USVI PaYS signing ceremony in April 2024.

# THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP IN SUPPORTING VETERANS

*By First Sergeant Immacula Pierre, 12th BN, Baltimore MEPS, Senior Enlisted Advisor Eastern Sector*

Veterans transitioning to civilian life often face unique challenges that require support and guidance. One effective way to provide assistance is through mentorship programs. By connecting veterans with experienced professionals, mentorship can play a vital role in helping veterans navigate their new lives and careers. This article explores the significance of mentorship in supporting veterans and how learning from experienced professionals can positively impact their transition.

## **Understanding the Veteran Experience.**

Transitioning from military service to civilian life can be overwhelming. Veterans often face a range of challenges, such as adjusting to new social environments, finding meaningful employment, and understanding the civilian workforce. Mentors who have successfully made this transition can offer invaluable insights into these areas, providing veterans with a supportive network and practical advice.

## **Skill Development and Networking.**

Mentorship programs can facilitate skill development and networking opportunities for veterans. Mentors can help identify transferable skills acquired during military service and assist veterans in aligning them with civilian career paths. Additionally, mentors can provide guidance on crafting resumes, preparing for job interviews, and developing networking strategies, empowering veterans to showcase their abilities effectively.

**Emotional Support and Empowerment.** Veterans often face emotional challenges from their service. Mentorship provides a safe space for veterans to discuss their experiences, concerns, and goals. Mentors, who may have faced similar circumstances, can offer empathetic listening and emotional support. This support fosters a sense of empowerment, resilience, and overall well-being in veterans during their transition process.

**Providing Role Models.** Mentors may act as role models for veterans, offering inspiration and motivation through their own successes and experiences. Mentors can help veterans set realistic goals and overcome obstacles by demonstrating



what is possible in civilian life. By sharing personal anecdotes, mentors show veterans that their difficulties can be surmountable. **(Cont. Page 5)**

# THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP IN SUPPORTING VETERANS (CONT.)

**Long-Term Professional Development.** Mentorship is not limited to the initial transition period; it can extend well into a veteran's professional journey. Mentors can continue to guide veterans in their career progression, helping them develop new skills, navigate challenges, and explore opportunities for advancement. The ongoing relationship fosters continued growth and ensures support is available whenever veterans require it.

The role of mentorship in supporting veterans cannot be overstated. Through the guidance and wisdom of

experienced professionals, mentorship programs provide veterans with the necessary tools, skills, and emotional support to transition successfully into civilian life. By leveraging their own experiences, mentors offer invaluable insights, networking opportunities, and emotional assistance, enhancing veterans' confidence and empowerment. As we recognize the importance of supporting those who have served, mentorship emerges as a powerful tool to ensure a smoother and more successful transition for our veterans.

## NEED MENTORSHIP RESOURCES?

All transitioning service members and their families need mentors to help them find their way in their new post-service world. As 1SG Pierre explains so eloquently above, transition, finding a new job, or moving to a new community is a challenge, but if you have someone there to guide you on your journey - especially when they have already been down the road you are traveling - it can make all the difference.

Get started with finding your mentor(s) by talking to people that you already know (Soldiers for Life, you all can be a critical resource for this!), and find more mentorship resources in the Employment, Education, and Army Retirement toolkits on the [Soldier for Life website](#).

**SOLDIER FOR LIFE**

*Toolkits*

**Employment, Education, Health & Wellness, and Army Retirement resources for military & veteran families.**

soldierforlife.army.mil

**SOLDIER FOR LIFE**

## TELL US WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR FROM US!

Are there any topics that you would like us to write about in *SFL Insights*? Or do you have any ideas for a future Soldier for Life Podcast episode?

Please get in touch with us and let us know! You can contact us at [usarmy-sfl@army.mil](mailto:usarmy-sfl@army.mil).

# CONNECTING TO COMMUNITIES

*By Lieutenant Colonel Ray Willson, Northeast/Europe & West Regional Director, U.S. Army Soldier for Life*

Often said and absolutely true, the strength of the Army is people. Army “people” are often thought of as Soldiers. In reality, Army people are Soldiers, veterans, and family members. To be successful, our Army must connect and engage with all three of these groups. Since I have been with Soldier for Life, it has been a privilege to be a part of that mission.

At Soldier for Life, we have the opportunity to connect and engage with individuals and organizations throughout the United States. We focus on three main areas: employment, education, and health and wellness. Some of the priorities included in these foundational pillars include meaningful employment possibilities for veterans and family members, educational opportunities, and resources to support service members’ whole health.

A less often discussed pillar, but equally important, is community outreach. Studies have shown that support to veterans is most effective when distributed at the community level. For us, community-level support includes 1) connecting with veterans and family members and encouraging them to tell their SFL Story, 2) collaborating with government and non-government organizations to understand the resources available and/or needed in their communities, and 3) providing the Soldier for Life lapel pin to every Army veteran we meet - whether they served one day or 40 years. Showing support at the community level is that important!



Outreach for Soldier for Life involves team members connecting with communities and organizations, traveling, and participating in engagements. This can include things like presentations to community and military leaders, state fairs, music festivals, and job fairs, to name a few.

The most important part of how we do our job - and something that is critical to the success of our mission - are the opportunities provided by community leaders and organizations. These opportunities help us to translate your concerns and needs to Army senior leaders. Equally important is that SFL shares the information we learn with Soldiers, veterans, and families. And because you have provided SFL with opportunities to visit, we give YOU the biggest THANK YOU, because your support is essential!

For those whose paths we have crossed on our travels, thank you! And for those who we are awaiting to meet, here’s to FY 2025 and beyond!

*Top photo: COL Jarrett Thomas and LTC Willson met with the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service program in February 2024.*

*Bottom photo: LTC Willson attended the Vermont Department of Labor Job Fair and connected with local Army recruiters in June 2023.*



# ARMY CREDENTIALING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SUCCESS

*By Sophia Sweeney, Program Manager, U.S. Army Credentialing Assistance Program and Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line*

SPC Steve Mateo joined the Army in 2017. He left a law enforcement position to join the Army hoping to make a better future for himself and his family. While at his first duty station at Fort Carson, both his leadership and his spouse encouraged him to further his education. Balancing his military duties, family, and education, he was determined to complete his education using the Army Tuition Assistance (TA) Program and was successful in completing his graduate degree in Higher Education Leadership.

Knowing he would eventually transition out of the Army, he felt it was important to build upon his skills to help secure a position in the civilian sector. SPC Mateo found out about the Army Credentialing Assistance (CA) Program when he went to his local Education Center. From there, he decided to pursue credentials. SPC Mateo stated, "I first decided to go for the Resilience Building Leader Program-Professional (RBLP) credential due to its general applicability in many fields. This program would have cost about \$1,200 out of pocket; however, (the CA Program) paid all of it. I wanted to be as prepared as possible for my civilian transition after the military, so I decided to go for one more credential. This time, I completed the Microsoft Office: Excel Specialist credential since it could easily be adapted to many fields and jobs. I completed this program in about two months and did not have to pay for anything out of pocket."

When asked if the CA and TA Programs were beneficial, SFC Mateo stated, "(o)verall, I believe I made great use of the Army's educational resources. I wanted to be as ready as I could for the transition to civilian life, and through determination and persistence, I believe I was." SPC Mateo's wife also



benefitted from Army programs, using the My Career Advancement Account program to complete her Certified Nursing Assistance program with zero out of pocket expenses.

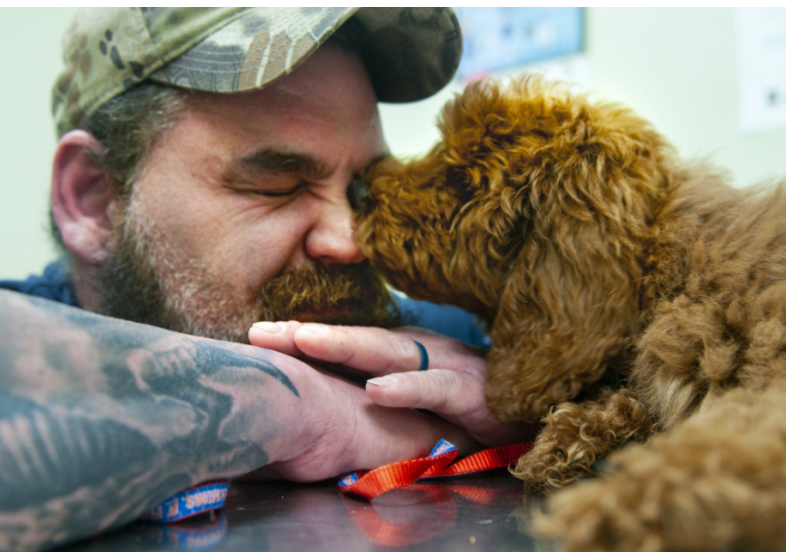
According to SPC Mateo, his education has benefitted him in the civilian sector. "A few months after leaving the service, I am now working as the Branch Manager for a local County Library in Southern California. Since this is my first supervisor role, I believe my RBLP credential boosted my resume during my job search. We also work with a lot of reports and many Microsoft programs, and I believe the Excel credential has been helping with this, as well."

Neither of these credentials were related to SPC Mateo's MOS, and they don't have to be. When pursuing credentials, Soldiers will enhance their skills and abilities both during their time and service and beyond. The opportunity is there, so take advantage of it while you can. No need to think of reasons why you can't, think of how you can make it happen - embrace the suck for a bit, it will be worth it. Cheers to SPC Mateo, congratulations on your accomplishments!!

# FROM SELFLESSNESS TO SELF-CARE

By First Sergeant Immacula Pierre, 12th BN, Baltimore MEPS, Senior Enlisted Advisor Eastern Sector

The transition from military to civilian life can be a challenging time for veterans and their families. They may face difficulties adjusting to a different lifestyle, finding employment, building new social networks, and coping with past traumas or injuries.



These challenges can accumulate and negatively impact their mental health, potentially leading to conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, or substance abuse. Prioritizing self-care can be instrumental in mitigating these challenges and promoting a smoother transition.

## Benefits of Self-Care

- **Mental Health:** Engaging in self-care activities helps veterans manage stress levels and improve their mental well-being. Self-care practices such as meditation, journaling, engaging in hobbies, and seeking professional support can aid in reducing anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms.
- **Physical Health:** Transitioning can lead to changes in routines, sleep patterns, and physical activity levels, which can have an adverse impact on veterans' overall physical health. Regular

exercise, a nutritious diet, getting enough sleep, and attending routine medical check-ups all promote physical well-being.

- **Self-Reflection and Growth:** Self-care activities provide opportunities for introspection and personal growth. These practices can assist veterans in clarifying their goals, discovering new interests, and renewing their sense of purpose in civilian life, leading to increased satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment.

## Strategies for Effective Self-Care During Transition

- **Build Support Networks:** Seek out veteran support groups, organizations, or social networks that provide a space for shared experiences and understanding. Connecting with fellow veterans can offer invaluable support and guidance during this period of change.
- **Prioritize Mental Health:** Regularly engage in stress-reducing activities such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or therapy sessions. Establishing healthy coping mechanisms can help veterans manage emotional challenges effectively. **(Cont. Page 9)**





## FROM SELFLESSNESS TO SELF-CARE (CONT.)

- **Establish Routine and Structure:** Create a daily routine that includes adequate sleep, balanced nutrition, regular exercise, and time for relaxation and hobbies. The structure provides stability and aids with your transition.
- **Engage in Hobbies and Interests:** Rekindling or discovering new hobbies and interests can be both fulfilling and therapeutic. Whether it's woodworking, painting, gardening, or playing an instrument, these activities promote relaxation, a sense of accomplishment, and personal enjoyment.
- **Seek Employment or Volunteer Opportunities:** Engaging in meaningful work provides a sense of purpose and helps veterans establish new networks and regain their sense of identity.

Explore possible job opportunities or consider volunteering within the community.

Self-care is vital for veterans as they navigate the unfamiliar terrain of military transition. By prioritizing self-care, veterans can safeguard their mental and physical well-being, enhance their overall quality of life, and discover a renewed sense of self in their new civilian roles. Engaging in self-care activities, building support networks, and seeking personal and professional growth opportunities are essential steps in promoting a successful transition.

Remember, taking care of oneself is a sign of strength and a prerequisite for flourishing in this new chapter of life.

## IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP. THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE THERE FOR YOU.

We all need help sometimes, and that's ok. But who do we go to? Talk to family and friends, or reach out to any of the many resources out there that offer help when we are in need:

### Military/Veterans Crisis Line

Dial 988 and Press 1, text 838255, or visit [veteranscrisisline.net](https://veteranscrisisline.net)

### VA Mental Health Resources

[mentalhealth.va.gov](https://mentalhealth.va.gov)

### Cohen Veterans Network

[cohenveteransnetwork.org](https://cohenveteransnetwork.org)

### Give an Hour

[giveanhour.org/military](https://giveanhour.org/military)

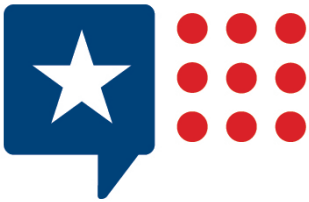
### Military OneSource

800-342-9647

### Objective Zero App

[objectivezero.org](https://objectivezero.org)

# Veterans Crisis Line



**DIAL 988** then  
**PRESS 1**

**Disclaimer:** The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by Soldier for Life, the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, the United States Army, or the Department of Defense of the linked websites or of the information, products, or services contained or referenced therein.

# ANALYTICS ALLEY: HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT TRANSITIONED SOLDIERS?

Between FY 2017 and FY 2023, an average of 61,000 Soldiers transitioned out of the Regular Army every year (including more than 59,000 in FY 2023). But how much do you know about those Soldiers? This is a question our Analytics and Research team here at Soldier for Life looks into every year.

According to the team's FY 2023 Analysis and Review report (which you can find on the [Transitioned Soldier Analytics page](#) on the SFL website), the bulk of the 59,000+ transitioning Soldiers in FY 2023 were Enlisted Soldiers, with most holding the ranks of E1-E4. The vast majority (34,465) served five years or less. Only 16 percent were women. And most were in the 25-34 age bracket (with 17-24 not far behind).

Interested in learning more? Be sure to visit the SFL website Transitioned Soldier Analytics page at the link above!

## TOP 5 TRANSITION STATES

- Texas
- North Carolina
- Georgia
- Florida
- California

**HAVE YOU SEEN??**

Our [Transitioned Soldier Analytics page](#) has state-specific transition information, too. Be sure to visit and check it out!

